United Nations

Daily Highlights

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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Secretary-General, on visit to Africa, meets with President of Djibouti and with Special Representative for Somalia and Under-Secretaries-General for Political Affairs and Peace-keeping; will also visit Ethiopia and Kenya, to develop concerted approach to situation in Somalia.

- Expressing sadness at murder of Haitian Justice Minister, Secretary-General says United Nations and OAS will redouble efforts for peace and democracy in Haiti.

- Secretary-General congratulates South African President Frederick de Klerk and ANC leader Nelson Mandela on winning Nobel Peace Prize; pledges support for establishment of non-racist, democratic South Africa.

- Syria tells Sixth Committee (Legal) of need to distinguish terrorism from just struggle for independence and self-determination; United States says no cause can justify acts of terrorism; Sweden says political will is needed to promote adherence to relevant conventions.

- World Meteorological Organization warns that ozone values over Antarctica fell to lowest levels ever recorded between late September and early October; Secretary-General of WMO appeals to all countries to uphold Montreal Protocol and phase out ozone-depleting chemicals.

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On the second day of his visit to Africa, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today travelled from Cairo to Djibouti, according to a United Nations spokesman. The Secretary-General met there with the President of Djibouti, Hassan Gouled Aptidon, to discuss the situation in Somalia, as part of his effort to develop a concerted approach with its neighbouring countries.

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The Secretary-General later met at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Office in Djibouti with his top aides working in Somalia, the spokesman said. That meeting was attended by Special Representative Jonathan Howe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs James Jonah and Under-Secretary-General for Peace-Keeping Kofi Annan.

This weekend the Secretary-General will be in Mauritius to attend the Summit Conference of Francophone countries. During his visit to Africa, he also plans to visit Ethiopia and Kenya to meet with the Heads of State of those countries for further discussions regarding Somalia.

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In a statement issued last night, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said that he was deeply saddened by the assassination of Haiti's Minister of Justice, Guy Malary, together with two bodyguards and a fourth person. He expressed his condolences to the families of those who had lost their lives, and his sympathy with President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Prime Minister Robert Malval and with the Haitian people on their loss, according to a United Nations spokesman.

The Secretary-General said that if those who had perpetrated the crime believed that their actions had weakened the resolve of the international community, they were mistaken. The United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS) would now redouble their efforts to promote the return of peace and democracy in Haiti, he stressed.

The United Nations this morning evacuated 51 dependants from Haiti to Santo Domingo, and instructed the remaining 325 staff in the country to move to the United Nations compound in Port-au-Prince. A spokesman described the situation as extraordinarily serious, and said the United Nations was "very worried" about the security and safety of personnel in Haiti.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today congratulated President Frederick de Klerk of South Africa and Nelson Mandela, President of the African National Congress of South Africa (ANC) on being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, according to a United Nations spokesman. The Secretary-General applauded the two leaders for working together along with the people of South Africa to eradicate the evil of apartheid.

The Secretary-General also pledged his full support for the establishment of a non-racist, democratic South Africa, the spokesman said.

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The Sixth Committee (Legal) yesterday began considering measures to eliminate international terrorism, and was told by the representative of Syria, Ahmad Hallak, that the international community must agree on a clear distinction between acts of terrorism and the just struggle of people for

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their independence and self-determination. He called for the convening of an international conference, under the auspices of the United Nations, to address the question of international terrorism and to develop an accepted definition. All efforts to fight international terrorism should be undertaken in accordance with the United Nations Charter, he said.

The representative of Sweden, Michael Odevall, speaking on behalf of the five Nordic countries, opposed the convening an international conference, saying that such an effort would not combat terrorism. Instead, it would confuse the situation by giving the impression that existing rules were insufficient. What was needed was the political will to enhance adherence to existing conventions against terrorism, and the use of sanctions against violators, he said.

United States representative Robert Rosenstock told the Committee that no cause could justify acts of terrorism. While poverty and injustice were fertile breeding grounds for terrorism, they could never justify such acts, he said, stressing the importance of United Nations work in the economic and social field.

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According to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), ozone values over the Antarctic fell to the lowest levels ever recorded for several days in late September and early October. In its latest bulletin on the ozone layer, the WMO said that in that period more than 60 per cent of the ozone was destroyed above the central part of Antarctica over an area greater than all of Europe. Furthermore, the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration reported that the relatively low temperatures prevailing in the stratosphere over the continent were continuing to facilitate ozone-destructive chemical reactions.

In a statement issued today, WMO Secretary-General G.O.P. Obasi renewed his plea to all countries to help protect the ozone layer by phasing out chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and other ozone-depleting chemicals, as required by the Montreal Protocol.

To protect the ozone layer, the invisible shield which filters out the sun's harmful ultra-violet rays, many countries have followed the guidelines drawn up by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and adopted at the Montreal conference on the issue. They have enforced such specific measures as removing CFCs from aerosol cans and food packing foam, and switching from air-conditioning systems that use CFCs. It is believed that without the protection of the ozone layer, more people would get skin cancer and cataracts, and plant and marine life would suffer.

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